

City of Melbourne

Anthony McIntosh, Program Manager, Tourism Operations

Jacqui Charlton, Professional Development (Tourism) Coordinator

Roxanne Peters, Information Officer, Melbourne Visitor Centre



The Product

The City of Melbourne's Tourism Melbourne branch has been a multi-award winning entrant in State and National tourism awards. It operates the Melbourne Visitor Centre in Federation Square, Melbourne Visitor Booth in the Bourke Street Mall, the City Ambassador Program, Melbourne Greeter Service, Cruise Ship Meet and Greet Program, Melbourne City Tourist Shuttle and Town Hall Tours.

Thirty staff and more than 300 volunteers ensure visitors are aware of the range of attractions and services that will make their stay in Melbourne and regional Victoria an enjoyable and exciting experience.

Tourism Melbourne's visitor services cater for nearly two million visitors a year, and the Melbourne Ambassadors are a reassuring sight on CBD streets as they offer tourist information to the public.

The Tourism Branch has a full time Professional Development and Training Coordinator, who coordinates an ongoing program of training for staff and volunteers, as well as accreditation, familiarisation programs, guest speakers and awards programs.

The Challenge

Melbourne Visitor Services requires staff who are able to cope with the high volume, high pressure work of the Melbourne Visitor Centre, Melbourne Visitor Booth in Bourke Street Mall, the City Ambassadors and other tourism services.

Because of its capital city importance, the City of Melbourne is also aware of its responsibility to contribute to the development of the wider tourism industry, specifically the mentoring and training of younger people. The tourism industry is a small and tight network, so it can be difficult for new people to enter the industry, to gain necessary experience and to build a network of contacts.

For these reasons, the City became an inaugural partner in the 'Developing Tourism Leaders' program in 2003. Operated by Service Skills Victoria in conjunction with Tourism Alliance, the annual program is sponsored by Melbourne Airport, William Angliss Institute of TAFE, Tourism Victoria, Accor Hotels and the City of Melbourne.

It is aimed at students of all ages who are studying tourism, events, hospitality and culinary arts in Victoria. The awards are an innovative employment development exercise for final year students, who are asked to develop innovative small business concepts and business plans for a fictitious tourism product. The business plans are judged by a panel of industry representatives on the feasibility of the concept, the product innovation and understanding of the tourism industry.

27 industry-related prizes are awarded in five categories. The winners submit a job application to the participating employer of their choice. The shortlisted candidates are interviewed and the successful candidate is offered a paid 13 week job placement.

The City seeks candidates who show vision for their future career in the tourism and who have an idea of what they could contribute to the City and what they expect to gain from the placement. A fundamental requirement is their ability to readily engage with people, rather than any pre-existing knowledge of Melbourne.

The interns are provided with 13 weeks of training and experience, which is rotated through the Melbourne Visitor Centre, the Melbourne Visitor Booth and the City Ambassador programs.

The Results

In 2007 the City increased its intake from one to three interns per year, in recognition of the outstanding candidates that had applied in previous years and of the benefit they bring to the operation.

The City's tourism management team acknowledges the organization has benefited enormously from the capabilities and enthusiasm of students straight out of tertiary education. They are seen to bring fresh ideas and look at things with new perspective.

According to the City's Professional Development (Tourism) Coordinator, Jacqui Charlton: *"We give the students the opportunity to work within a high performing, high profile, well respected tourism operation. They can place that experience on their CV and use it to leverage further job opportunities within the industry."*

"Most people do not think 'visitor services' when they enter the industry. It doesn't feature very much on the course curriculum. It's the less sexy side of tourism. But, no matter where you end up working in the industry, there's usually a link back to visitor services."

*"I think that employers sometimes forget or perhaps don't realise that the benefits they gain from providing a student work placement, for even a short term, are often equal or even greater than the benefits that they provide to the student.
"It's someone who comes in with very fresh eyes. It's not about getting them to make the coffee and do the photo copying, but rather is about getting real value both from and for them."*



One of the City's interns during recent years was Roxanne Peters, who submitted a business plan for a Mornington Peninsula winery tour during her final year in a Diploma of Tourism Management at Chisholm TAFE in Frankston. Ms Peters was the only one in the class of 25 who aspired to work in visitor services.

The plan was submitted by Chisholm Institute and the award secured Ms Peters a 13 week paid placement at the City of Melbourne. She was subsequently offered casual work in the Melbourne Visitor Centre, which culminated in a permanent part time role as an Information Officer. She also spends half the week coordinating the Mornington Information Centre.

Roxanne admits that nothing had prepared her for the reality of working in the industry. She says that working in such a professional organization was initially overwhelming, in addition to learning new skills.

“ I used the 13 weeks to learn as much as I could and to speak to as many people in the industry as possible. If I had finished after the three months I would have been very happy with the knowledge I had gained and the contacts I had made to find another job.

“ The days go very quickly in the Centre; it can be quite emotionally and physically draining. During times like the Australian Open, you look up from the counter and there is a sea of people waiting to be served. I absolutely love it and I wouldn't be where I am and I could not have developed my skills without the opportunity I received.

“ In fact, without the placement I may not have got into this field or perhaps not even in the industry. Like most of the students, I may have ended up in a travel agency, which was not what I wanted.”

Jacqui Charlton says the City is committed to continue working with the Developing Tourism Leaders Program as a simple, low-cost way to assist the industry and because of the immense benefit the Council's 'Tourism Melbourne' branch receives through it.